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THE GOR'KIY PHARMACEUTICAL FACTORY

By Special Correspondent

Effective 1 January 1949, the Gor'kiy Pharmaceutical Factory stopped producing galena preparations and began to produce annually 10 million boxes of gelatin capsules (both hard and soft types) and starch wafers. This is the first time in the USSR that such a large volume of capsules and wafers will be produced by a single factory. The factory, however, is not sufficiently staffed with personnel, and it is up to every worker of the Gor'kiy Pharmaceutical Factory to do his utmost until more specialized personnel can be obtained.

All the major building and remodeling which was completed during the last quarter of 1948 was possible only through the wholehearted cooperation of the factory workmen.

One of the chief problems which faced the Gor'kiy Factory's personnel was the determination of the type of equipment necessary for the production of capsules and wafers. Many aspects of the problem were solved by utilizing the experience of the Kazan and Novosibirsk Pharmaceutical Factories which had produced capsules and wafers in the prewar period. With the aid of models and blue prints, the Gor'kiy workers built duralumin vats for the gelatin and many other necessary pieces of equipment.

In December, the Gor'kiy workers started construction of the soft capsule shop. However, part of the roof has still not been completed due to a lumber shortage. Glavmed has admitted that it has not provided sufficient supplies. Meanwhile, the production of soft capsules filled with castor oil is being carried out in the packing plant, which has temporarily been designated the experimental laboratory. New personnel are also being trained here.

- 1 -

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Utochkin, director of the Factory, has several times indicated that the factory is far below its production norms. For example, the January norms called for 250,000 capsules and only 15,000 were manufactured. Much of this production lag is attributed to the labor-consuming manual work which is a vital part of the production of gelatin capsules.

Labor and production at the factory are not organized according to efficient new methods. It might be suggested that new enterprises designed in the future should take full advantage of the achievements of both the USSR and foreign chemical industries. Various agencies are to blame for the lack of modernization in the new Gor'kiy plant. Glavmedprom did not examine the plans carefully. The Soyuzmedpromproyekt Trust did not bother with the plans, and neither did the Gor'kiy Oblpromproyekt.

As far back as October 1948, Utochkin submitted letters to the various interested agencies to the effect that methods employed at the Novosibirsk and Tbilisi Pharmaceutical Factories were out of date. Apparently nothing was done in reply to these letters. On the contrary, Mozhnitskiy, senior engineer of the Industrial Planning Administration, suggested that the Gor'kiy Pharmaceutical Factory workers solve their own problems.

However, there were some organizations which aided the construction of the Gor'kiy Pharmaceutical Factory. In November 1948, Kul'bakh, Senior Scientific Collaborator of the Leningrad Scientific Research Chemico-Pharmaceutical Institute arrived in Gor'kiy. He confirmed the fact that the technique employed in the manufacture of capsules was far from the best, and gave a few suggestions so that the existing equipment might be utilized to the greatest advantage. He returned to Leningrad after 3 days, and since then the Institute has never answered any of the letters which were sent by the Factory requesting further aid in solving its problems.

The only real help was given by the planning department of the Gor'kiy Oblast Council. They supplied competent industrial engineers and personnel and did much to keep things going. Nevertheless, the factory still has to rely primarily on manual labor and is now running about 50 percent behind its norms.

All the above reflects on the poor performance of Glavmedprom, which, after all, is supposed to aid new enterprises. It did attempt to help in a few ways, but even this aid proved of no real value. For example, it ordered ammonia refrigerator equipment which arrived at the Factory lacking many parts. Though an order was forwarded long ago, the Kazan Pharmaceutical Factory has failed to ship any of the presses for the manufacture of starch wafers.

Several important problems remain to be solved. At present, no one seems to know what is done with the old equipment which was used for the manufacture of galena products.

Much doubt surrounds the methods for obtaining raw materials. Some of the raw material received has been found to be of poor quality. For example, one batch of gelatin which was sent from the Moscow office of Glavmedprom turned out to be irregular in viscosity and transparency and had to be discarded. The Gor'kiy Factory needs the edible type of gelatin produced by the Ivanovo Meat Combine, yet the administration governing the operation of the Gor'kiy Factory has done nothing about procuring some of the Ivanovo gelatin for Gor'kiy.

And finally, it appears that the product of the Gor'kiy Pharmaceutical Factory is far from satisfactory. The present production of gelatin capsules filled with castor oil are shipped in dirty boxes. It is suggested that this product will sell much faster if it is packed in a clean box and wrapped in colored paper.

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- 2 -

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